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Conference*

*Second Stage  
March 17, 1932 - January, 1933*

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# THE WORLD DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

Second Stage, March 17, 1932 - January, 1933

by

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with the aid of the Research Staff of the Foreign Policy Association

## THE RECORD OF THE CONFERENCE

AT the opening session of the Disarmament Conference on February 2, 1932, the president, Mr. Arthur Henderson, declared that the chief task of the Conference was "to arrive at a collective agreement on an effective program of practical proposals; speedily to secure a substantial reduction and limitation of all national armaments."<sup>1</sup> Six months later, when the General Commission adjourned at the end of July for its long "summer recess," the Conference admittedly had made little progress toward the goal set by Mr. Henderson. Despite the fact that world trade had continued its alarming decline during the interval, and that the financial burdens borne by the peoples of the world had further increased, the Disarmament Conference had failed to establish even the basis for a "collective agreement" for reduction and limitation of armaments.

### THE BENES RESOLUTION

The tangible results of the first six months' negotiations were set forth in a resolution adopted on July 23.<sup>2</sup> This resolution was drafted by M. Benes, the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister, in private conversations with delegates of three of the great powers—the United States, Great Britain and France. It represented the maximum agreement these powers had been able to reach among themselves, and outlined preparations for the second stage of the Conference.<sup>3</sup> It did not represent the maximum program which a majority of the countries represented at Geneva were prepared to adopt; Germany and Soviet Russia voted against the resolution on the ground that it failed to settle the fundamental issues and was "entirely inadequate," and a majority of the small powers expressed a desire to adopt more far reaching proposals.

1. Cf. League of Nations, Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments, *Journal* (hereafter referred to as *Journal of the Disarmament Conference*), No. 2, February 3, 1932; cf. also W. T. Stone, "The World Disarmament Conference: First Stage," *Foreign Policy Reports*, Vol. VIII, No. 6, May 11, 1932.

2. Cf. *Journal of the Disarmament Conference*, No. 112, July 21, 1932.

3. For an excellent commentary on the resolution, prepared by an international group at Geneva, cf. "The First Stage in Disarmament," *Geneva Special Studies* (Geneva Research Center, 3 Rue Butini, Geneva), Vol. III, No. 8.

The resolution reaffirmed the determination "to achieve a first decisive step" toward disarmament and declared that the Conference:

"decides forthwith and unanimously, guided by the general principles underlying President Hoover's declaration:

"That a substantial reduction of world armaments shall be effected to be applied by a general convention alike to land, naval and air armaments;

"That a primary objective shall be to reduce the means of attack."

During its earlier sessions, the Conference had rejected drastic proposals for immediate or total disarmament introduced by the Soviet delegation, and had voted to proceed by successive stages toward the ultimate objective.<sup>4</sup> That objective, however, had not been defined, nor was it clarified in the Benes resolution beyond the assertion that substantial reduction should be achieved and that a primary aim should be "to reduce the means of attack." The latter aim reaffirmed the principle of "qualitative disarmament" or the abolition of certain aggressive weapons, previously adopted by the General Commission on April 22.<sup>5</sup> The theory underlying "qualitative disarmament" was that abolition of weapons, such as heavy field artillery and bombing airplanes, would enormously reduce the power of a state to wage large-scale offensive operations, and that the legitimate defensive strength of states would be proportionately increased. The principle received strong support. The Hoover plan, the Italian, Russian and German proposals, as well as those of other powers, had favored abolition of certain aggressive weapons; the French proposals while rejecting total abolition had favored placing certain aggressive weapons at the disposal of the League of Nations.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the principle of qualitative disarmament had been strongly endorsed by a large section of the organized peace movement<sup>7</sup> and was unanimously

4. *Journal of the Disarmament Conference*, No. 112, cited.

5. *Journal of the Disarmament Conference*, No. 50, April 20, 1932; *ibid.*, No. 53, April 23, 1932.

6. *Ibid.*, No. 53, April 23, 1932.

7. Cf. League of Nations, Document No. 99.

8. Cf. Resolution of League of Nation Societies, Budapest Conference, *Geneva Special Studies*, cited.

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adopted by the General Commission in the resolution of April 22.<sup>9</sup>

Prior to July 23, however, the Conference had not succeeded in applying these general principles, and the additional points of agreement set forth in the Benes resolution were confined to methods of limitation and to humanitarian rules of war rather than to direct reduction of armaments. These points of agreement include:

#### I. Air Forces

"Air attack against the civilian population shall be absolutely prohibited."

"The high contracting parties shall agree as between themselves that all bombardment from the air shall be abolished . . ." provided an agreement can be reached on the limitation of military aircraft and the regulation and control of civil aviation.

The value of these prohibitions was questioned by many delegations.<sup>10</sup> The Conference, during its first six months, had reached no agreement either on the limitation of military aircraft or the control of civil aviation. The futility of prohibiting bombing without abolishing military aircraft, or at least all bombing aircraft, was emphasized by several countries. The great powers, however, were sharply divided: Germany, whose air armaments had been abolished by the Versailles Treaty, and several other countries proposed the total abolition of all military aircraft. The United States and Italy, together with many small powers, favored abolition of bombing planes. France, while rejecting abolition, proposed that certain categories of aircraft should be placed at the disposal of the League of Nations—which the United States and Great Britain opposed. These divergent views had not been reconciled. The Air Commission, moreover, had been unable to define what aircraft is most specifically offensive or most threatening to civilian populations, and asserted that:

"All aircraft without alterations of any kind and whatever their tonnage may constitute a danger to civilians whether used directly to attack civilians or against military objectives situated in densely populated areas."<sup>11</sup>

#### II. Land Forces

Two points of agreement on land armaments were incorporated in the Benes resolution:

"All heavy land artillery" between certain maximum and minimum calibre "shall be limited" provided that an effective method is found to prevent rapid transformation of fixed guns in fortresses and coastal defenses into mobile guns.

"The maximum unit tonnage of tanks shall be limited."

<sup>9</sup> The text of the resolution on qualitative disarmament was as follows: "Without prejudice to other proposals which fall to be discussed under later heads of the Agenda, the Conference declares its approval of qualitative disarmament—i.e., the selection of certain classes or descriptions of weapons, the possession or use of which would be absolutely prohibited to all states or internationalized by means of a general convention." *Journal of the Disarmament Conference*, No. 63, April 23, 1932.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, No. 113, July 22, 1932.

<sup>11</sup> League of Nations, *Air Commission Report to the General Commission*, Conference Document No. 123.

Although the General Commission had unanimously endorsed the principle of qualitative disarmament, the governments were unable to reach any agreement on what constituted an "aggressive" weapon. The resolution on qualitative disarmament was referred to the Land Commission, which was asked to determine what weapons were most specifically offensive. The Commission, after prolonged study, discovered a marked divergence of views which it was unable to reconcile; its report, therefore, consisted merely of a statement of the main groups of opinion. While these differences were expressed in technical terms, they represented in certain cases differences of a political character. Thus, one group of states, including Germany, which was denied the use of all tanks and mobile artillery over 105 mm. (4.1 inches) by the Treaty of Versailles, regarded these weapons as particularly offensive and urged their abolition. Another group, including France, regarded tanks up to 35 tons and mobile artillery up to 220 mm. (8.2 inches) as more necessary than threatening to national defense. A third group, including the United States and Great Britain, regarded mobile artillery over 155 mm. (6.1 inches) as particularly offensive. Great Britain wished to retain tanks up to 20 or 25 tons.<sup>12</sup>

The agreement finally reached in the Benes resolution was accordingly limited to the acceptance of a general principle. But the value of this principle was reduced by a reservation that, even before the size of field guns can be fixed, an effective method must be found to prevent transformation of fixed guns into mobile guns. The French delegation insisted that so long as coastal defense guns may be transformed into mobile field guns, the size of the latter can not be effectively limited. Furthermore, as battleships are allowed to retain 16-inch guns under the London Treaty, fixed guns in coastal fortifications should not be reduced below this size. These reservations were opposed by the Swedish and Dutch delegations, who introduced an amendment to limit the size of mobile land artillery, but the amendment was defeated.<sup>13</sup>

#### III. Chemical Warfare

The Benes resolution recorded the following agreement on chemical, bacteriological and incendiary warfare:

"Chemical, bacteriological and incendiary warfare shall be prohibited under the conditions unanimously recommended by the Special Committee."

This provides only for prohibition of the use of chemical warfare and does not prevent manufacture of and experimentation in

<sup>12</sup> League of Nations, *Land Commission Report to the General Commission*, Conference Document No. 122.

<sup>13</sup> *Journal of the Disarmament Conference*, No. 113, July 22, 1932.

chemical warfare in peace-time. The Special Committee referred to in the resolution agreed that the use of chemical warfare should be included in qualitative disarmament and that weapons or appliances for this purpose should be prohibited; but the Committee failed to recommend methods by which preparations might be abolished.<sup>14</sup> Thus, in the opinion of several delegations, the resolution does not assure an advance beyond the Geneva protocol of 1925, which prohibited the use of chemical weapons in war as between countries adhering to the agreement. This protocol came into force on February 8, 1928 and has been ratified with reservations by 34 states, including the British Empire, France, Germany, Italy and Soviet Russia.<sup>15</sup> The United States and Japan have not yet ratified.

#### IV. Permanent Disarmament Commission

The final point of agreement recorded in the Benes resolution follows:

"Supervision. There shall be set up a Permanent Disarmament Commission with the constitution, rights and duties generally as outlined in Part VI of the Draft Convention submitted by the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference with such extension of its powers as may be deemed by the Conference necessary to enable the convention to be effectively applied."

Although great importance was attached to this provision by many countries, the functions of a Permanent Disarmament Commission were not discussed during the first stage of the Conference. As drafted by the Preparatory Commission, this body was to be charged "with the duty of following the execution of the present convention"; complaints and alleged breaches of the Disarmament Convention were to be laid before the Commission which was to report to the states concerned and to the League Council. France and certain other countries have advocated an extension of the authority of such a commission in order to provide for "supervision" or "control," including the right to investigate on the spot charges of violation. The right to investigate German armaments, formerly vested in the Inter-Allied Control Commission, was entrusted to the Council of the League of Nations when Germany entered the League.

In addition to these "points of agreement," the Benes resolution outlined a program for the further work of the Conference and called upon the Bureau to continue the study of other important questions during the summer recess. The questions referred to the Bureau included the method of bringing about a "strict limitation and a real reduction of effectives," on which no agreement

had been reached during the first stage; the limitation of national defense expenditure, or budgetary limitation; the private manufacture and trade in arms; the limitation of naval armaments; and rules for dealing with violations.

Of these questions, the limitation of effectives was generally regarded as the most vital as well as the most controversial. The Conference, indeed, had been unable to agree even on a definition of effectives, partly because of the differences between conscript armies, professional armies, and militia systems, and partly because of conflicting national policies. How can conscript troops be compared with professional soldiers or with a volunteer or compulsory militia? Should "trained reserves" be included in the calculation of effectives? In considering these questions the Bureau was requested to examine President Hoover's proposal for reducing the "defense component" of land forces by approximately one-third.

Little progress had been made, likewise, in the application of the method of budgetary limitation recommended by the Preparatory Commission in its Draft Convention, although the United States had withdrawn its objection to this method in so far as it referred to the material of land warfare.<sup>16</sup> The violent dislocation of international exchange and fluctuations in purchasing power resulting from departure from the gold standard had created new difficulties in the application of budgetary limitation.

Control of the private traffic in arms, regarded by many countries as an essential part of any effective treaty, was referred to a special committee.<sup>17</sup> The countries party to the London and Washington treaties were invited to confer together and to report back to the Conference as to further measures of naval reduction which might be feasible, and other naval powers were invited to confer and submit proposals.

Finally, the Benes resolution declared that "the present resolution in no way prejudices the attitude of the Conference toward any more comprehensive measures of disarmament or towards the political proposals submitted by various delegations."

#### CRITICISM OF THE CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

The meager positive achievement recorded in the Benes resolution was severely criticized by a number of delegations during the general debate.<sup>18</sup> This criticism was directed chiefly against the failure of the Conference to apply the principle of qualitative disarmament, its failure to take any definite action

14. League of Nations, *Chemical and Bacteriological Weapons, Special Committee, Report to the General Commission*, Conference Document, No. 120.

15. *Idem., Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous and Other Gases and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare*, Conference Document No. 58.

16. *Journal of the Disarmament Conference*, No. 8, February 10, 1932.

17. League of Nations, "Committee for the Regulation of the Trade in, and Private and State Manufacture of, Arms and Implements of War," *Report of Progress of Work*, Conference Document 145, October 15, 1928.

on the Hoover plan, and its inability to agree on any plan for the limitation and reduction of effectives. Several small powers, in particular, resented the manner in which Great Britain, France and the United States had held private discussions on the Hoover plan, outside the framework of the Conference, thus preventing open discussion and blocking definitive action by the Conference.

Although details of the Hoover plan were criticized, the drastic reductions proposed by President Hoover were enthusiastically acclaimed by the smaller powers, by Italy and Germany, as well as by world opinion. The British and French delegations, however, remained silent, and the plan was not discussed before the General Commission for more than two weeks. During this interval private conversations were held between the American, British and French delegations, from which Germany, Russia, Italy and the smaller powers were excluded. The formal discussion in the General Commission on July 8 and 9<sup>18</sup> revealed strong support for the principles of the Hoover plan, but the failure of Great Britain, France and the United States to agree prevented action before adjournment. A final effort to secure adoption of the principles laid down in the Hoover plan was made by the Soviet delegation which submitted a series of amendments based on the American proposals and insisted on a record vote.<sup>19</sup> Thus the American delegation was forced to choose between a resolution which did not embody the Hoover proposals but represented the maximum of agreement at the moment, and the Soviet amendments which embodied the Hoover proposals but did not have the support of the principal powers. In this dilemma, Ambassador Gibson voted in favor of the resolution of July 23, and against the amendments based on the Hoover plan. His explanation, and that of others who voted for the resolution, was that "the principle of unanimity in international gatherings was the bulwark of national independence and, therefore, when an agreement was reached, as in the present case, it represented not the point to which daring leaders had attained nor even the position occupied by perhaps the great majority of states, but rather that point which the last straggler seeking the same goal had passed." A moment before he had explained that "naturally, [he] would have preferred a resolution accepting still more definitely the details of the President's plan, but the American delegation felt that the

resolution before the Commission contained the maximum of agreement which could at present be achieved and offered the best hope of eventual attainment of the goal in view."<sup>20</sup> In the final vote on the resolution of July 23 M. Litvinoff, the Soviet delegate, sharply announced: "I vote for disarmament, but against the resolution."

These criticisms of the Benes resolution and the meager results of the first stage of the Conference do not take into account the fundamental obstacle which, in the opinion of many impartial observers, prevented a greater measure of agreement—the political conflict brought to a head by the issues of "security" and "equality." From the opening day of the Conference these two political issues had overshadowed the technical questions of qualitative disarmament and direct limitation of effectives and material; yet they had not been openly discussed and much less settled.

The question of security is familiar to all students of disarmament and international organization.<sup>21</sup> It involves not merely the conflict between the former European Allies and the defeated powers on the vital issue of *status quo* or revision of the Peace Treaties, but also a conflict over the theory of enforcing peace by collective action, a matter of concern to the entire world. The Tardieu plan submitted to the Disarmament Conference in February, embodied the traditional French thesis based on the application of economic and military sanctions and the creation of an international police force to prevent aggression. The Herriot plan, presented to the Conference in November, embodied the same theory in modified form. In discussing the Benes resolution, M. Herriot declared:

"It is, of course, understood that we do not demand security for ourselves alone. That guarantee we desire for all nations great or small, for ex-enemies as well as for ex-allies. We are of the opinion that it may afford the solution of political problems which cannot be settled independently of it . . . . In our view, the outlawry of war must be supplemented by the outlawry of the aggressor; the title of belligerent must be denied this outlaw. Those who are unprotected and those who are victims must be safeguarded by the effectual protection of the nations as a whole."<sup>22</sup>

The application of this thesis was implicitly denied in the plans and proposals submitted by the Anglo-Saxon powers—Great Britain and the United States—and criticized by Germany and the defeated powers as an excuse for the failure of the armed powers to apply direct limitation and reduction of armaments.

18. *Journal of the Disarmament Conference*, No. 113, July 22, 1932; *ibid.*, No. 114, July 23, 1932; *ibid.*, No. 115, July 24, 1932.

19. *Journal of the Disarmament Conference*, No. 103, July 8, 1932; *ibid.*, No. 104, July 9, 1932.

20. Under the rules of procedure the Conference was required to vote for or against the original text of the resolution and was not permitted to vote directly on the amendment. Cf. *Journal of the Disarmament Conference*, No. 113, July 22, 1932.

21. League of Nations, *Minutes of the General Commission*, Conference Document C.G./P.V. 23, p. 10.

22. Cf. Raymond L. Buell, and John Dewey, "Are Sanctions Necessary to International Organization?" *F. P. A. Pamphlet*, No. 82-83, June 1932.

23. *Journal of the Disarmament Conference*, No. 114, July 23, 1932.

### GERMANY'S CLAIM TO EQUALITY

The question of equality has been closely related to that of security. From the first session of the Preparatory Commission in 1926, Germany had made it clear that it intended to press for equality as an essential condition to Germany's adherence to any disarmament treaty. At the Disarmament Conference the issue was raised in private conversations as well as in public sessions. During Secretary Stimson's visit to Geneva in April, Chancellor Brüning proposed that Germany be accorded "equality" in principle, in return for a pledge not to increase the existing size of German armaments.<sup>24a</sup> The proposal was not accepted, due chiefly to the opposition of France which insisted on the perpetuation of the disarmament clauses of the Versailles Treaty. With the failure of the resolution of July 23 to refer to equality, the German delegation declared that it could not "undertake to continue its collaboration if a satisfactory solution of this decisive point for Germany is not reached by the time the Conference resumes its work." In the eyes of Germany, the resolution showed quite clearly that general disarmament would not follow the system imposed on Germany; consequently Germany could not accept the resolution, nor would it cooperate with the Conference until its condition was met.

A month after the General Commission had adjourned for its "summer recess" on August 29, Baron von Neurath, the German Foreign Minister, handed to the French Ambassador in Berlin an *aide memoire* proposing that the two countries "enter into a confidential discussion" as the best way of arriving at an understanding on the contentious issue of equality.<sup>24a</sup>

The German note, in itself, was apparently a moderate presentation of the German claim to equality which had already been put forward at Geneva on many occasions. In approaching France alone, the German government was presumably following a course which had been agreed on at Geneva at the end of July. In private conversations between M. Herriot and the head of the German delegation it was agreed, according to the Germans, that discussions should begin the end of August or the first of September.

It was in accordance with this understanding, therefore, that the German government had proposed a "confidential discussion" with France. The subject of this discussion, the German note explained, should be Germany's military organization under the terms of a disarmament treaty applying equally to all

<sup>24a.</sup> New York Times, April 26, 1932; cf. also Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Bulletin of International News*, September 15, 1932; and League of Nations, *Provisional Minutes of the General Commission*, Conference Document C.G./P.V. 27, p. 6.

<sup>24a.</sup> New York Times, September 7, 1932.

powers. Before discussing the terms of such a treaty, however, Germany would insist upon the unconditional acceptance of two basic principles: (1) that the proposed disarmament treaty "as far as Germany is concerned, takes the place of Part V of the Versailles Treaty"; and (2) that Germany must not be subjected to special limitations when the disarmament treaty expires. Once these principles had been accepted, Germany would be prepared to withhold her rights to full *de facto* equality during the life of the first disarmament treaty. If the other powers were unable to accept the limitations which were laid down in the Versailles treaty, Germany would be satisfied with "certain modifications" in her existing status. The note mentioned three possible modifications:

Progressive reduction of the period of enlistment in the Reichswehr (fixed at twelve years in the Versailles Treaty);

Freedom to determine the allocation of military forces;

Short-term training of a special compulsory service of militia for the purpose of maintaining domestic order and for frontier and shoreline protection.

Presumably, this proposal meant that Germany did not expect to increase the number of men in the Reichswehr beyond the 100,000 permitted under the Versailles Treaty, but did wish to build up a militia reserve. It implied that the Reich would be given the right to possess all types of armament allowed to other nations under the disarmament treaty, such as tanks, heavy artillery, military airplanes, etc., but it would not exercise this right during the period of the treaty.

When the contents of this private note were made public on September 6, following alleged revelations in the French press, the German government was sharply criticized in Great Britain and France for thus compromising the success of the Disarmament Conference and hampering the important work of economic reconstruction begun at Lausanne.<sup>25</sup>

#### THE FRENCH REPLY

The French reply, published September 12, contended that Germany was actually proposing rearmament—a proposal which France could not consider. The note proceeded to deny Germany's right to repudiate or modify Part V of the Versailles Treaty by unilateral action—a course advocated in Germany but not suggested in the German note. Under the provisions of the Versailles Treaty, the French government pointed out, German armaments can only be modified "by the Council of the League whose decisions she has undertaken strictly to observe." Thus France rejected the invitation to begin private conversations with Ger-

<sup>25.</sup> Cf. New York Times, September 7, 1932.

many, contending that any modification of German armaments must come from the League of Nations and that, in any event, the necessary negotiations could not be undertaken without consultation among the powers adhering to the pact of confidence signed at Lausanne on July 13.<sup>26</sup> The British reply, published September 18, likewise denied the right of Germany to abrogate Part V of the Versailles Treaty and supported the legal construction of the Treaty as interpreted by France.<sup>27</sup> It also proposed as a "concession" that Part V of the Versailles Treaty, with certain modifications, might be incorporated in the Disarmament Treaty. This was so obviously unacceptable that it was dropped in later British proposals.

The diplomatic crisis precipitated by the German proposals was due less to the contents of the note than to the conviction in Paris that Germany was deliberately embarking on a campaign to destroy the Versailles Treaty and to regain its position as a first-class armed power. What alarmed the French government and aroused the opposition of the Nationalist press in France was the belief that Germany, under the cloak of its claims for equal rights, sought only the repudiation of the Versailles Treaty, its own rearmament and the restoration of its former military power. Especially alarming in French eyes were the speeches and writings of General von Schleicher, then Reichswehr Minister and the power behind the von Papen government.<sup>28</sup> In these statements General von Schleicher reiterated in the forceful language of a soldier the official German thesis on disarmament. "No German government," he declared, "could sign a disarmament convention that in all things does not accord Germany the same rights as any other country." In some instances, however, he went beyond the official declarations by asserting: "We won't put up with being treated as a second-class nation any longer,"<sup>29</sup> and "if submarines, bombing planes, heavy artillery and tanks are now designated as a means of defense, by what justification can one deny Germany this protection?"<sup>30</sup>

#### THE CONFERENCE MEETS WITHOUT GERMANY

In this atmosphere of mutual recrimination, all efforts to bring Germany back into the Disarmament Conference were unavailing. On September 21 the Bureau of the Disarmament Conference met at Geneva in the absence of the German delegation, and

adjourned five days later without having discussed the German demand for equality or other "political" issues.<sup>31</sup> A British proposal for a conference of the four principal European powers—Great Britain, France, Italy and Germany—to meet in London early in October for the purpose of breaking the disarmament deadlock met with opposition in France, and the plan was abandoned.<sup>32</sup> In place of the four-power conference, conversations between Premier Herriot and Prime Minister MacDonald were held in London on October 13, where plans for a later conference with Germany were discussed. When Geneva was proposed as the place for this meeting, however, Germany objected, and again the plans for an early conference were dropped. With the approach of the next meeting of the Disarmament Conference Bureau on November 3, no basis for dealing with the equality issue had been found.

Meanwhile, despite these outward signs of discord, the French and British governments had been moving quietly toward a revision of their own disarmament policies with the object of bringing Germany back to the Conference. Faced with the prospect of a complete collapse of the Disarmament Conference, at a time when France was preparing to appeal to the United States for relief from war-debt payments, Premier Herriot was forced to search for a new formula. Accordingly, with the support of his own party, the Radical Socialists, Herriot began the preparation of a new French plan which he outlined to the Chamber of Deputies on October 28,<sup>33</sup> presented to Geneva on November 3, and published on November 14.<sup>34</sup>

#### THE FIVE-POWER DECLARATION OF DECEMBER 11th

Following the publication of the French and British proposals, a final effort was made to induce Germany to return to the Disarmament Conference. The initiative was taken by Mr. Norman Davis, a member of the American delegation, who succeeded in bringing together Prime Minister MacDonald of Great Britain, Premier Herriot of France, Baron von Neurath of Germany, and Baron Aloisi of Italy for a series of private conversations at Geneva early in December. The results of these conversations were announced on December 11 in the form of a declaration signed by the representatives of the five powers. The declaration read in part as follows:

32. A move to rule out major political problems from the discussions of the Bureau, which was made by the British and French delegates, was resisted by the president, Arthur Henderson, who held that the Bureau was competent to discuss questions raised by the German demand for equality. *Journal of the Disarmament Conference*, No. 1, September 26, 1932.

33. *New York Times*, October 6, 1932.

34. Cf. *Le Temps*, October 29, 1932.

35. *New York Times*, November 15, 1932.

1. The governments of the United Kingdom, France and Italy have declared that one of the principles that should guide the Conference on Disarmament should be the grant to Germany, and to the other disarmed powers, of equality of rights in a system which would provide security for all nations, and that this principle should find itself embodied in the convention containing the conclusions of the Disarmament Conference.

. . . It is clearly understood that the methods of application of such equality of rights will be discussed by the Conference.

2. On the basis of this declaration, Germany has signified its willingness to resume its place in the Disarmament Conference.

3. The governments of the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy are ready to join in a solemn reaffirmation to be made by all European States that they will not in any circumstances attempt to resolve any present or future differences between the signatories by resort to force. This shall be done without prejudice to fuller discussions on the question of security.

4. The five governments of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Germany declare that they are resolved to cooperate in the conference with the other States there represented, seeking without delay to work out a convention which shall effect a substantial reduction and a limitation of armaments with provision for future revision with a view to further reduction.<sup>36</sup>

As a result of this declaration, the General Commission of the Conference was to meet on January 31 in a final effort to draft a conclusive disarmament treaty. The decla-

ration was widely interpreted in Germany as *de facto* acceptance of the German claim to equality and, to a certain extent, as a "victory" for German diplomacy. The press, however, pointed out that for the most part the formula agreed on had not yet been incorporated in a binding general disarmament convention. It was argued, furthermore, that the definite linking of German equality with French security would give rise to endless and perhaps futile discussion when the Disarmament Conference reconvenes. Nevertheless, it was felt that even if the Conference were to fail ultimately, the disarmament clauses of the Versailles Treaty could not be revived any more than reparation could be revived after Lausanne.<sup>37</sup> In Paris the government press supported the declaration as a basis for future discussion, which safeguards the essential points of the French thesis. *Le Temps* declared that "instead of obtaining as a condition for resumption of negotiations the recognition of the right of equality, Germany received a promise of conditional equality within a system providing security for all nations, the terms and details of which are entirely reserved for future decisions."<sup>38</sup> The French Nationalist press denounced the declaration as abandonment of the French position.<sup>39</sup>

## PROBLEMS AHEAD OF THE CONFERENCE

When the Disarmament Conference reconvenes on January 31, 1933, it will be faced with the difficult task of applying the principles laid down in the five-power declaration, and co-ordinating the divergent proposals laid on the table during the first stage of the Conference. If tangible results are to be achieved in the form of a convention, some solution must be found for the conflict between the French disarmament plan, based on the concept of security through sanctions, and the American, British and German proposals based on varying methods of direct limitation.

The new French plan incorporates the traditional theory that the problem of security is inseparable from disarmament and that progress can only be achieved by strengthening the international organization of armies and navies on a purely defensive basis.<sup>39a</sup> The system of security rests on two groups of inter-related proposals: one based on a general agreement implementing the Kellogg pact and providing for consultation, the

other based on a special organization for Continental Europe.

### THE HERRIOT PLAN

The application of the European system is dependent on the acceptance by all the powers taking part in the work of the Disarmament Conference of four principles which are implied in the renunciation of war. These principles are:

Any war undertaken in violation of the pact of Paris is a matter of interest to all powers and shall be regarded as a breach of the obligations assumed toward each one of them;

In the event of a breach or threatened breach of the Paris pact, the said powers shall concert together with a view to appealing to public opinion and agreeing upon the steps to be taken;

In the application of the pact of Paris any breach of that pact shall involve the prohibition of direct or indirect economic or financial relations with the aggressor country. Measures shall be taken to make that prohibition immediately effective.

The said powers shall declare their determination not to recognize any *de facto* situation brought about in consequence of the violation of an international undertaking.

These four principles are intended to insure a cooperative policy on the part of non-European states and non-members of the League of Nations and to make it certain that the European states could apply sanctions in Europe without fear of opposition from outside that continent. Presumably

36. *Ibid.*, December 12, 1932.

37. *New York Times*, December 13, 1932; cf. also a survey of German press comments in *Der Zeitspiegel*, First Year, No. 24, December 17, 1932.

38. *Le Temps*, December 11, quoted in the *New York Times*, December 12, 1932.

39. Cf. *Le Journal des Débats*, December 11, quoted in the *New York Times*, December 12, 1932.

39a. Cf. League of Nations, Conference Document No. 146.

the United States would be expected to join in a consultative pact, and to agree not to aid an aggressor. Secretary Stimson, in his speech before the Council on Foreign Relations on July 8, 1932, declared that consultation was inherent in the Kellogg Pact, and that a consultative treaty was unnecessary. He also declared that the Kellogg Pact had altered the old concept of neutral rights and obligations, and implied that the United States would not be obligated to observe neutral undertakings with a state which had violated that pact. France, however, would prefer to incorporate these doctrines in a formal agreement.

The plan for Europe is more far reaching. The primary object is to extend the Locarno agreements and to assure that definite aid will be furnished by the European states to a country which is attacked in violation of the League Covenant or the Kellogg pact. The plan seeks, first, to eliminate the ambiguities in the League Covenant (which were revealed when the Council and the Assembly sought to deal with the Manchurian controversy), especially those relating to the determination of "aggression," and to decisions requiring a unanimous vote.<sup>40</sup> The French plan would guarantee assistance to a state when its territory "is attacked or invaded by foreign forces." It would authorize the League Council to decide by majority vote that assistance should be given whenever it ascertains that attack or invasion has taken place.<sup>41</sup> To ascertain the facts in any given dispute, a permanent commission of diplomatic and military representatives, appointed by the League Council, would be established in each of the signatory countries.

All European states entering the agreement would be required to subscribe to the General Act of Arbitration, providing for pacific settlement of all disputes.<sup>42</sup> Should one of the signatories refuse to conform to its obligations, or fail to carry out an award or judicial decision, the League Council would have authority to decide the steps to be taken. The European states would be obligated to carry the decision into effect. In determining whether aggression had taken place, or whether there had been a breach of international obligations, the League Council would be empowered to act by majority vote, rather than by unanimity as required in certain cases in the Locarno treaties and in the Covenant.

40. Buell, "The Weakness of Peace Machinery," cited.

41. This definition of aggression is qualified as follows in the text of the plan: "An aggression as thus defined cannot be taken to include certain cases such as the existence of an agreement to the contrary, the case of self-defense (i.e., the repulsing of armed forces which have entered by violence the territory of the state which is defending itself) and action undertaken in execution of Article XVI of the Covenant. . . ."

42. League of Nations, *Pacific Settlement of International Disputes, Non-Aggression and Mutual Assistance*, C.536.M.163.-1928.IX., October 15, 1928.

The application of this European organization would depend on its acceptance by "a sufficient number of powers" and on the enforcement of the system of economic and military sanctions. The memorandum states that "France considers the loyal application of Article XVI as an essential element of the plan she has worked out."

The military proposals relating especially to European powers supplement the political system outlined above and cannot be applied independently of that system. They have two basic objects:

To reduce the offensive character of national forces, on the basis of "equality of defensive status";

To place specialized national forces at the disposal of the League as a contingent for joint action against an aggressor.

To accomplish the first object, the plan proposes that the home defense forces of all Continental European states should be reduced to a uniform short service conscript system, organized on a strictly "defensive" basis. This implies that very few professional troops will be included in the forces assigned for the defense of the home territory, except for a professional contingent at the disposal of the League. The number of short-term conscripts in the home forces and the period of service will be limited in conformity with the provisions of Article 8 of the League Covenant.<sup>43</sup> The principle of qualitative disarmament is endorsed and the use of heavy artillery and powerful tanks is prohibited in the national armies of the European states. A certain number of such weapons would be retained, to be placed at the disposal of the League of Nations.

The effect of these proposals, if adopted, would be to place all continental armies on the same footing. It would grant Germany equality of rights in so far as effectives are concerned. The French contend that the short-term conscript system is less adapted to aggression than is the professional army, as the former is composed of citizen soldiers with only limited training. French military leaders, in fact, did not wish to impose a professional army on Germany in the Versailles Treaty, and Marshal Foch, as head of the Military Committee at the Paris Peace Conference, recommended a short-term conscript army of 200,000 men for Germany. It was the opposition of Lloyd George which induced the Peace Conference to reject the Foch plan and to impose a long-term professional army of 100,000 men.<sup>44</sup> Since the

43. That is, according to the plan, "in such a way as to insure the national security of each state, taking account of its geographical situation and circumstances. In particular, the numerical limitation of the short service effectives will be adapted to the inequalities and variations of the resources of recruitment of the various signatory powers. . . ."

44. Cf. David Hunter Miller, "My Diary of the Paris Peace Conference," *Minutes of the Supreme War Council*, Vol. XV, p. 134-44.

war, French military writers have continued to see a danger in the compact German professional army which they regard as a well-trained cadre for the organization of an aggressive force.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, since the war France has reduced the period of service in the active army from three years to twelve months. If the French plan should be adopted by European countries, France would apparently consider a further reduction to nine months.

Whether or not this system would produce a reduction of armaments or a purely defensive organization is open to question. The French army, since its reorganization in 1930, has increased the number of professional troops to approximately 106,000 men out of a total enlisted force of 651,000.<sup>45a</sup> These professionals are distributed through the three distinct categories into which the army is divided: the home forces, composed of French troops stationed in France; the oversea forces, composed of native and foreign troops; and the mobile forces, composed partly of native and partly of French troops, stationed in France and North Africa. It would be quite possible under the French plan to place a portion of the professional troops under the nominal authority of the League of Nations and the remainder under the oversea forces, which are exempt from the provisions of the European agreement. Moreover, the plan permits retention of professional instructors for conscript troops even in the home forces. Some critics assert that there would in fact be no real reduction in professional troops, but that these would be transferred to the colonial forces and the League contingent.<sup>46</sup>

The plan would presumably entail a complete reorganization of the German army and the retirement of the professional force now serving a twelve-year term of enlistment. A small contingent might be retained at the disposal of the League of Nations. In place of the present Reichswehr, Germany would recruit a short-term conscript army, and build up a trained reserve which it does not now possess. If France and Poland refused to reduce their forces, moreover, Germany might be expected to claim a larger number of troops than at present on the ground that 160,000 or 170,000 conscripts are the equivalent of 100,000 professionals.<sup>46a</sup>

45. Cf. General Requin, "The Armaments and Military Power of Germany," *Foreign Affairs*, January 1933.

45a. Theoretical effectives, calculated on the basis of existing law. Cf. League of Nations, *Armaments Year Book, 1932*, special edition.

46. Cf. H. N. Brailsford, *The World Tomorrow*, December 7, 1932. Cf. also, Jean Blum, *Le Populaire* (Paris), November 17-29, 1932.

46a. When Marshal Foch's plan for German disarmament was rejected by the Peace Conference in 1919, the Military Committee reported that 140,000 professional troops were the equivalent of 200,000 short-term conscripts. Miller, "My Diary of the Paris Peace Conference," cited, p. 288.

#### Measures to Strengthen the League Covenant

Finally the Herriot plan attempts to strengthen the vague provisions for collective action provided for in Article XVI of the League Covenant. Every disarmament plan advocated by France has sought to place military forces at the disposal of the League of Nations.<sup>47</sup> The new plan is not as ambitious as the Tardieu project submitted in February 1932, and does not call for an international army on a world scale. Instead, it proposes that the European states place permanently at the disposal of the League a small number of professional troops, equipped with the powerful war materials prohibited for the national armies. These specialized contingents would be stationed in the countries by whom they were furnished; they would be constantly ready for action, and would assure speedy aid to a European state which had been attacked or invaded. The League of Nations would determine when aid should be furnished in accordance with the political arrangements outlined above. The mobile land material at the disposal of these specialized contingents would be stored in each of the contracting states under strict international supervision. Any state victim of aggression would regain the free use of the specialized contingent and the war stocks. This supervision, which would be part of a general system of international control, would involve an investigation at least once a year. Manufacture of armaments would also be under international supervision. A country which was attacked would regain the use of the specialized contingent and war stocks within its own borders.

Naval and air forces, as well as oversea land forces, are not directly included in the continental system outlined in the French plan. Nevertheless, the plan suggests certain bases for the limitation of naval and air armaments. These include: first, a Mediterranean pact between the naval powers concerned (Great Britain, France and Italy) providing for cooperation of the fleets against an aggressor. Such a political agreement, the French memorandum declares, would permit a further reduction of naval armaments. Reduction, however, should be based on the ratios of strength existing in 1931, a basis which would deny Italy the parity for which it has consistently contended. Second, the plan includes the earlier French proposal for a European air force, composed of specialized national units to be placed at the disposal of the League of Nations, and a European air transport union for control of civil aviation. Adoption of

47. Cf. Stone, "The Disarmament Conference," cited, on summary of Tardieu plan.

48. Survey of German press comments in *Der Zeitspiegel*, First Year, No. 23, December 3, 1932.

these measures would permit the European powers to abolish bombing airplanes, as far as their national armies are concerned, and to prohibit all bombardment from the air.

The French plan was received with greater sympathy in the United States and Great Britain than the earlier proposals of Premier Tardieu. It was conceded that the project for a European agreement contained many original suggestions and that it offered a basis for practical discussions. In both countries, however, where public and official opinion has been cool to military sanctions, the security system for Europe was regarded as too extreme to be applied at the present time. In Germany the idea of a uniform short-term army system was welcomed as a concession to Germany's equality claims, but the security system was severely criticized. The Right press stated flatly that the plan was not even a basis for discussion. It was viewed as another attempt to perpetuate the Versailles system and to nullify the possibility of peaceful revision through the League Covenant.<sup>50</sup>

#### THE HOOVER PLAN

The Hoover plan presents a totally different "solution" for the disarmament deadlock, and one which does not admit the validity of the security thesis. It is based on the assumption that national armaments are relative and that drastic reductions can be made without decreasing the security of any state. This assumption has been criticized on the ground that the American plan does not provide for proportionate reductions by all powers. Germany, presumably, would not be expected to reduce further, while France would be forced to accept a material cut. The plan contends that a simple but definite method of reducing the overwhelming burden of armaments is needed to cut through the maze of technicalities in which the Conference has become entangled. The plan is based on three general principles:

That the Pact of Paris can only mean that the nations of the world have agreed to use their arms solely for defense;

That reduction should not only be carried out by broad general cuts in armaments, but by increasing the relative power of defense through decreases in the power of attack;

That proportionate reductions must be made by all powers, and that these must be real and positive.

These principles are applied to land, naval and air armaments, and the proposals dealing with the three elements are inter-related and cannot be applied separately.

The Hoover plan accepts the principle of qualitative disarmament, and proposes the abolition of all tanks, all chemical warfare and all large mobile guns. It does not contain technical definitions and does not specify

the size of mobile gun which the United States would prohibit.<sup>51</sup>

In dealing with the problem of effectives, the Hoover plan proposes a new standard of limitation. Land armaments are considered to have two functions. One is the maintenance of internal order, the function of a "police component"; the other is defense against foreign attack, the function of a "defense component." The plan suggests that the police component of each country be reduced on a common basis to a size which is deemed sufficient to maintain internal order, and proposes that the proportion of troops to total population allowed Germany and the other defeated powers in the peace treaties be accepted as the basis. Germany was allowed 100,000 soldiers for a population of 65,000,000; Austria was allowed 30,000 troops for a population of 6,000,000. This formula, with the necessary corrections for countries with colonial possessions, should be sufficient, according to the American government, to provide for the maintenance of internal order.

The defense component of all armies, over and above the troops maintained for preserving internal order, would be reduced by one-third. This would afford a large saving in the military budgets of the great powers, according to President Hoover, and add to the assurance of peace.

The plan for naval limitation does not distinguish between aggressive and defensive ships, but calls for the following direct reductions in numbers and tonnages from the Washington and London Treaty figures by the five naval powers: battleships, by one-third; aircraft carriers, cruisers and destroyers, by one-fourth; submarines, by one-third —no country to retain more than 35,000 tons.<sup>52</sup> All bombing planes should be abolished and bombardment from the air prohibited.

Public opinion in Great Britain, Germany, Italy and other European countries hailed the Hoover plan as a constructive project for substantial reduction which would cut military budgets by many millions. The governments of France and Great Britain, however, were cool toward the plan and saw many technical defects. They pointed out that the proportion of troops allowed Germany for maintenance of internal order differed from that allowed the other defeated powers and was not a practical basis for the police component. On the basis of the German ratio of 100,000 troops to 65,000,000 population, the United States would actually be entitled to a police component of nearly 200,000 men whereas

50. In the Land Commission the United States representatives favored the abolition of guns over 155 mm. (6.1 inches).

51. The reduction by France and Italy, who are not parties to the London Treaty, should be based on the so-called naval accord of March 1, 1931.

the full strength of the American army today is only 138,000. France objected to the failure of the plan to make any provision for security, and pointed out that the arbitrary one-third reduction would constitute an injustice to the smaller powers, and would increase the proportionate military strength of Germany without giving added security to France. Great Britain claimed that it had already reduced its army to the level of a police component.

#### THE BRITISH PROPOSALS

The British proposals, which will be considered with the French and American plans and the recommendations of the Bureau when the Conference resumes its work, were submitted in July and November.

The July proposals dealt with land, naval and air reductions. They corresponded to the Hoover proposals in accepting qualitative disarmament, but fixed the size of mobile artillery to be abolished at 155 mm. and tanks at 20 tons, and did not accept the one-third reduction of the defense component of land armies. The naval proposals favored a reduction in the size of future battleships and cruisers rather than reduction by number, and abolition of the submarine. The maximum size of battleships would be 22,000 tons, with 11-inch guns; cruisers would be reduced to a maximum of 7,000 tons; aircraft carriers to 22,000 tons, with 6.1-inch guns. The air proposals would prohibit all bombardment from the air and include strict limitation of all military and naval aircraft, but would not abolish bombing planes.

In November, Sir John Simon supplemented these proposals by statements in the House of Commons and at Geneva.<sup>62</sup> Great Britain, he said, was prepared to grant the principle of equality, provided German armaments were not increased; it was not prepared, however, to accept the prohibition of all weapons denied to Germany in the Versailles Treaty. The British proposals assume that the chief naval powers will not agree to reduce battleships to 10,000 tons, the maximum size allowed to Germany; they advance arguments favoring the retention of "small" tanks under 20 tons and the retention of mobile artillery above 105 mm.; they cite objections to the abolition of all bombing planes and defend the use of bombers "for police purposes in outlying places." Finally, they propose an "immediate reduction" by the leading air powers to the level of Great Britain, following which a one-third all-round reduction in the air forces of the world would be made.

In order to prevent an increase of Germany's powers of military aggression, the British propose that Germany should be allowed to build battleships as large as those

of other powers, provided that the tonnage in any category is not increased beyond the Versailles Treaty level. They acknowledge in principle Germany's right to possess tanks and other artillery allowed to other powers, but question whether these weapons should be allowed "in practice," and "think it not unreasonable that Germany should refrain from making any claim for military and naval aircraft" pending examination of the British air proposals.

#### CONCLUSION

When the General Commission resumes its work on January 31, almost a year will have elapsed since the first meeting of the Disarmament Conference. To those who looked for an immediate reduction of armaments, the results of the first year's efforts are a serious disappointment. Notwithstanding the laborious work of the various sub-committees which have reported progress, the points of conflict probably outweigh those of agreement.

The measures on which agreement has been reached include the general points endorsed in the Resolution of July 23: qualitative disarmament, prohibition of air attack against civilian population, prohibition of chemical warfare, etc., provisional agreements on control of arms manufacture, budgetary limitation and supervision; and the principle of equality of rights approved in the five-power declaration as part of "a system which would provide security for all states." The points of conflict embrace the fundamental theories upon which the proposals of the major powers are based. The French system of security has been opposed by Germany, which regards it as a plan to enforce the Versailles Treaty, and ignored by the United States and Great Britain which were hesitant to give further guarantees for security. The Hoover plan for direct military reductions independent of security was consistently opposed by France and the European states dependent on France. The British proposals for direct reductions were also opposed by France and those countries asking further security. Finally, the German demands for full equality of rights, while accepted in principle as one of the aims of the Conference, are yet to be applied in the form of a definite agreement. That agreement in turn is to be worked out in relation to a system of security.

In the final analysis, therefore, these points of conflict represent divergent national policies which in each state have the support of strong public opinion. Those policies have been modified only slightly since the opening of the Conference; they must undergo fundamental modification if agreement is to be reached on a general disarmament treaty.

<sup>62</sup> New York Times, November 18, 1932.